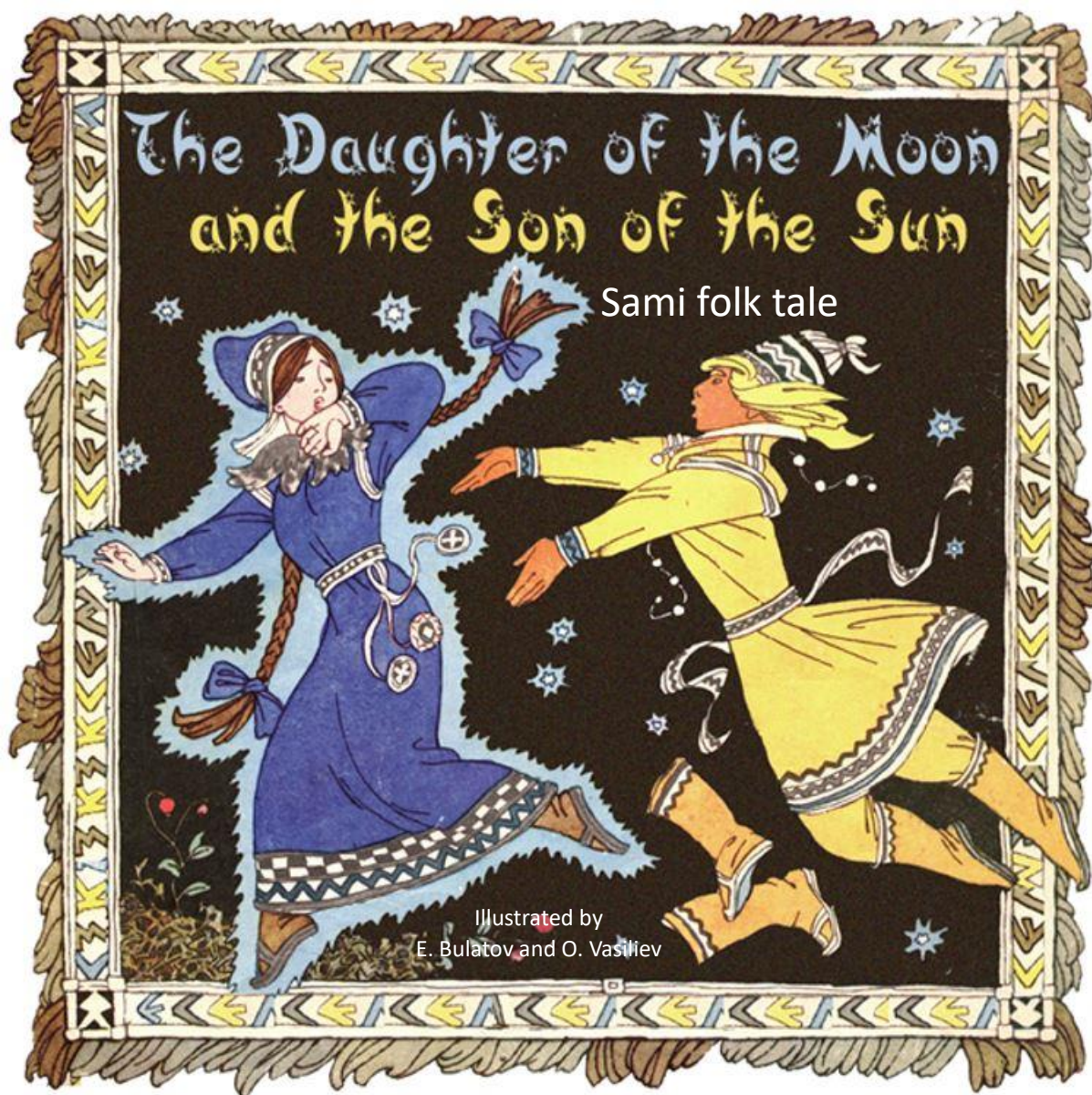
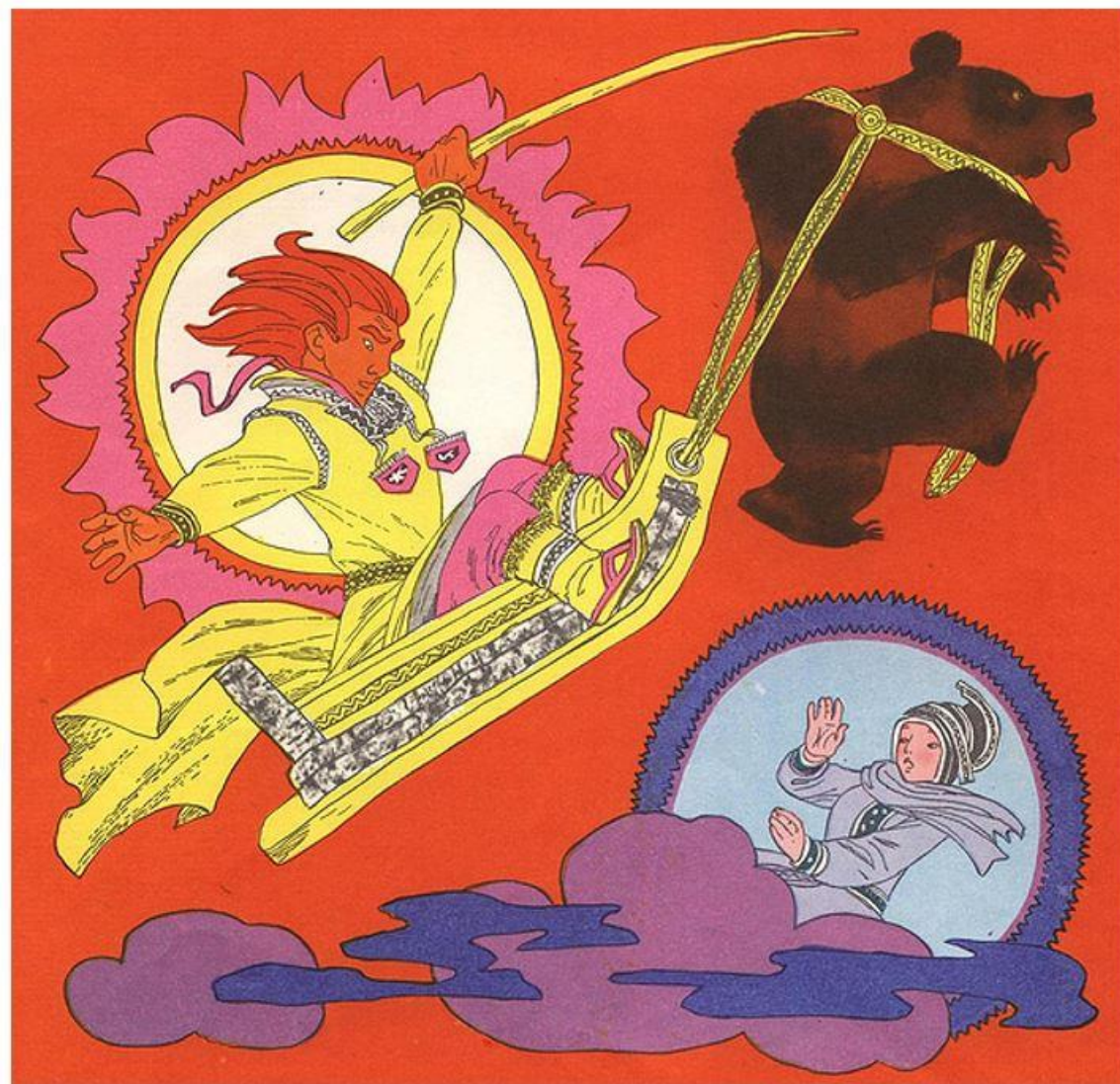


The Daughter of the Moon and the Son of the Sun

Sami folk tale



Illustrated by
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All through the long, long day the Sun rides over the blue sky in his single-runner boat sledge and surveys his world. In the morning the Bear pulls him, in the afternoon the Reindeer Bull and in the evening the Reindeer Doe. There are many many things the Sun must do: he must give life to all which is to live, he must help the trees and the reindeer moss and the grass to grow, he must give light to animals, people and birds so that they will grow strong and fat and multiply, increasing the wealth of the Sun. By evening the Sun is tired and sinks wearily into the sea. All his desire is to rest, to sleep. But one day his son Peivalke-Sunbeam began to pester him.

“Father, the time has come for me to marry.”

Well, that was true — it was high time.

“Have you chosen a bride?”

“There is none. I tried my golden boots on all the maids on earth, and not one could wear them. Their feet are heavy, they can’t leave the ground. But I must fly through the sky.”

“You have sought in the wrong place, Peivalke,” said the Sun. “I will ask the Moon. I’ve heard that she has given birth to a daughter. Of course, the Moon is poorer than we are, but like us she lives in the sky.”

The Sun waited for the day when the Moon rose in the morning, then approached her. “Tell me, neighbour,” he said, “is it not true that you have a fair daughter? I have a suitor for her, my son Peivalke-Sunbeam.”

Mother Moon’s shining face dimmed.

“My child is still small. When I hold her in my arms I cannot feel her weight. How can she marry?”

“That doesn’t matter,” said the Sun. “My house is wealthy. We shall feed her well and she will grow. Come, let my son Peivalke see her.”



“Oh — no!” cried the Moon in affright and drew a cloud over her child. “He will scorch her, your Peivalke. To tell you the truth, she is already betrothed to Nainas Northern Lights. There he is, walking over the sea.”

“Ah, so that’s it?” said the Sun angrily. “So you refuse us for a miserable strip of colour? You seem to have forgotten, neighbour, that I give life to all things. I have wealth, I have strength!”

“Your strength, neighbour, is but the half of strength,” said the Moon. “When dusk comes, then where are you? And in the night? And all through the long winter — where is your strength? But Nainas Northern Lights shines in the winter too, and gives light at night.”

These words only infuriated the Sun still more. He hurled fiery arrows, he seethed with rage. “All the same,” he roared, “I’ll marry my son to your daughter!” Thunder roared, the wind howled, waves rose high on the sea and the hills trembled. Everything on earth shook and swayed. The reindeer huddled together and people hid in vezhas, their summer shelters.

The Moon hurried away into the darkness of night.

I must hide my child securely from the Sun’s eye, she thought. On a lake she saw a floating island where lived an old man and his wife, both good, kind people. To them, she thought, I can entrust my daughter.

The Sun tired of his raging, the thunder muttered into silence, the winds died down. The old man and his wife went into the forest to strip birch-bark. And there they saw, hanging from a fir branch, a silver cradle.



There was nobody in it, yet they heard a child's voice. "Niekia — I'm not here! And now — here I am!"

They looked again and there lay a child in the cradle, just like an ordinary human child except that she gleamed with moonlight.

The old people carried the cradle home, glad that now they had a daughter. They tended her and brought her up, and she obeyed the old man like a father and the old woman like a mother, but at night she would leave the vezha, raise her face to the Moon, hold up her arms and shine more brightly. She learned to make curtains and quilts of reindeer skin and to embroider them with beads and silver. When she wanted to play she would call, "Niekia — I'm not here!" and vanish, but her laughter would ripple close by. So the old people called her Niekia.



Niekia grew into a maid. Her face was round and rosy like cloudberry, her hair was a mist of silver threads, and she stood slender and shining. In time a rumour reached the Sun that on this island lived a maid unlike the daughters of men. The Sun sent his Peivalke to her. Peivalke flew to the island, and looked into the old people's vezha. He saw Niekia and fell in love with her.

"Fair maid," he said, "try on my golden boots."



Niekia blushed. She pulled on the boots and then cried out. "Oh, oh, they bum, they hurt me!"

"Never mind," said Peivalke reassuringly, "you'll get used to them." He wanted to pick Niekia up in his arms and carry her away, but she cried, "I'm not here, I'm not here, I'm gone!" and like a shadow she melted away and vanished. The golden boots stood empty by the door.

Till night fell Niekia hid in the forest thickets. But when the Moon rose in the sky she followed her beam through the woods, over the mountains and across the tundra. Mother Moon led her to the sea and to a lonely house standing on its empty shore. Niekia entered the house, but found nobody there. It was very dirty and untidy, so Niekia brought in a bucket of water, and washed and tidied everything. When she had finished she felt tired, so she turned into an old spindle, thrust herself into the wall and fell asleep.

When dusk fell Niekia heard heavy footsteps. Then warriors in silver armour entered, each stronger and fairer than the other. These were the Northern Light brothers led by the eldest, their leader Nainas.

"Our house is clean," said Nainas. "A good housewife must have come to us. I don't know where she is hiding, but I can feel the gaze of eyes."

The brothers sat down to supper. When they had finished they started their play, a mock battle among themselves, now slashing with sabres, now coming to grips. Their weapons struck white fire, and crimson flashes danced in the sky.



The brothers sang a song about the warriors of the sky and flew away one after the other. Only Nainas remained, a pale shadow in the house.

"Show yourself, whoever you are," he pleaded. "If you are an old woman you shall be my mother, if you are of my age you shall be my sister, if you are a young maid I shall make you my bride."

"Here I am," said Niekia softly and stood before Nainas in the dim light of early dawn.

"Will you be my wife, Niekia?" he asked.

"Yes, Nainas," Niekia answered so softly he could hardly hear her.

But now the sky blazed and the edge of the Sun appeared.

"Wait for me, Niekia!" cried Nainas, and was gone.

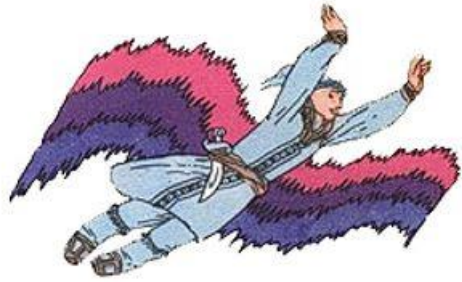
Every evening Nainas and his brothers flew to their home, every evening they played their game in the sky and with sunrise flew away.

"Stay here, Nainas," Niekia begged. "Remain with me for just one day."

"I cannot," said Nainas. "Over the sea the battle of the skies awaits me."

Then Niekia pondered how to keep him. She made a curtain of reindeer skin and embroidered it with the silver Milky Way and great stars; this she hung beneath the ceiling in the house.

When night came Nainas flew home with his warriors. They played in the sky, amused themselves and lay down to rest. Nainas slept deeply, yet every now and then his eyes opened; but over him he saw a dark sky and the Milky Way, and thought it was still night, still too early to rise.



Niekia wakened and went outside, but she forgot to shut the door. Nainas opened his eyes and saw the bright morning through the open door, and the Bear pulling the Sun across the blue sky. He ran out of the house and called his brothers, but the Sun saw him, sent down a shaft of heat and pinned him to the ground. Niekia rushed to him and shielded him from the Sun with her own body.

Nainas rose, became a pale shadow and melted in the sky. But the Sun seized Niekia by her plait, burned her with his fiery eye and called his son Peivalke. "You may kill me, but I will not marry Peivalke!" Niekia wept. Then the Sun flung Niekia into the arms of Mother Moon.

And her mother caught her, pressed her to her heart, and still holds her to this day. Can you see the shadow of her face on the face of the moon? She is watching, watching the pale strip over the sea, watching the battle of the Northern Lights in the sky, and cannot tear her eyes away from it.